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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 387th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 14 December 2017, at 4 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Seck ..... (Senegal)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

Reports on meetings of the Committee at United Nations Headquarters and abroad

Updates from Member States on their activities related to the question of Palestine

Other matters

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The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair** said that the special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, held on 29 November 2017, had been a success. The meeting had been attended by the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council, the Deputy Secretary-General, the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Observer for the State of Palestine and the Chief of the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Committee had also heard statements made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the League of Arab States, the African Union Commission and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The Secretary-General of Amnesty International had also delivered a statement as the representative of civil society. The evening programme had included two cultural events: a private viewing of the exhibition "The Palestinian People: Everlasting Roots, Infinite Horizons", and a performance by singer-composer Ameer Dandan.

3. On 30 November 2017 the General Assembly had adopted a series of resolutions related to the mandate of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Special Information Programme on Palestine of the Department of Public Information, and the peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question, including Jerusalem.

4. Following the announcement, on 6 December 2017, of the decision by the United States of America to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to transfer its embassy to that city, the secretariat of the Committee had held an emergency meeting the next day. On that occasion it had issued a communiqué stating that the decision was a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions and had reaffirmed its long-standing support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people. The communiqué had also reaffirmed the Committee's support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and freedom in an independent Palestinian State at peace with all its neighbours.

5. At an emergency meeting held on 8 December 2017, the Security Council had, by an overwhelming majority, rejected the decision of the United States, called for de-escalation and reaffirmed its principled stance with respect to Israel: Jerusalem was an international city and the capital of two States, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016).

6. In the context of the current discussion, the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was important. UNRWA provided essential services for Palestinian refugees, who were spread over various countries including the State of Palestine itself, and Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. In order to complete its planned activities for 2017, UNRWA must make up a funding shortfall of $49 million. UNRWA had recently made the wise decision to continue its activities, despite lacking sufficient funding. However, following the announcement made the previous week regarding Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees feared that their fate would become less of a priority. Members of the Committee and donors should therefore help UNRWA to close its funding gap and contribute generously towards its work for the first half of 2018.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

7. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the events held to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People had been very well attended; the cultural evening programme had been particularly successful. In that connection, he invited Member States to display the exhibition, "The Palestinian People: Everlasting Roots, Infinite Horizons", in their capitals. The exhibition, which was available in digital format, showcased the achievements of 100 Palestinians who had made contributions to diverse fields including medicine, science and the arts.

8. The Committee delegation visit to the United Republic of Tanzania had equally been a success, and had demonstrated how much could be achieved in only three days; along with the Committee's successful visit to Latin America earlier in 2017, it was evidence that such engagement should be expanded.

9. The decision by the Government of the United States of America to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was unilateral, irresponsible and reckless, and a clear violation of international law and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The Security Council had united to defend its

resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980) which stipulated, inter alia, that all the unilateral actions that had taken place affecting Jerusalem were null and void, and had no legal validity, as well as calling on all Member States not to have diplomatic representation in Jerusalem. Those resolutions represented unanimous international agreement, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), that Jerusalem had a special status that was not to be changed unless there was peace between all the parties involved. The decision by the United States was illegal and provocative, not only to Palestinians but to billions of Muslims and Christians around the world. Jerusalem was pivotal to peace in the Middle East.

10. The day following the announcement there had been an emergency meeting of Arab ministers for foreign affairs, who had instructed the Arab ambassadors in New York to submit a draft resolution to the Security Council. On 13 December 2017 OIC had held a summit on the same issue, which had resulted in a declaration by its 54 member States affirming that East Jerusalem was the capital of the State of Palestine.

11. Security Council consultations were almost complete to prepare a draft resolution that would reflect the united position of 14 of its members. The draft resolution would reaffirm principles reflected in previous Security Council resolutions: it would not denounce or condemn any State, but it would state that any action to alter the legal or demographic status of Jerusalem was null and void, and without legal validity, and would call on States not to locate their embassies in Jerusalem. The objective was to defend existing principles regarding Jerusalem. The vote would take place on 18 December 2017 at the latest.

12. On a related matter, he strongly urged Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, which would take place on 19 December 2017 in the General Assembly plenary. A show of more than 180 votes would be a strong statement by the General Assembly of its support for the right of the Palestinian people to live in an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

13. **Mr. Sinirlioğlu** (Turkey) said that on 13 December 2017 OIC had convened an extraordinary summit in Istanbul to discuss the situation created by the unfortunate decision by the President of the United States of America to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move its embassy there. The 54 OIC member countries had adopted three documents: a resolution, a declaration and a final communiqué, in which they rejected, and condemned in the strongest possible terms, the President's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the occupying Power, affirmed that it was legally null and void and decried it as an attack on the historical, legal and national rights of the Palestinian people.

14. Several paragraphs of the final communiqué were related to the United Nations: the Security Council was called upon to immediately reaffirm the legal status of Jerusalem, end the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine, ensure international protection of the Palestinian people and implement all of its resolutions concerning Palestine. At the summit OIC had also affirmed its readiness to seek redress for the grave violation through the United Nations General Assembly, should the Security Council fail to act in accordance with General Assembly resolution 377 A (V), entitled "Uniting for peace".

15. The resolution adopted by OIC requested its member States to take the necessary measures to ensure full compliance with all OIC resolutions on the Palestinian cause, and, in addition, "to procure a resolution by the United Nations Security Council, which affirms the legal status of the City of Al-Quds [Jerusalem], and sets a credible course consistent with international law and international consensus for realizing peace". At the summit OIC had also declared East Jerusalem the capital of the State of Palestine, and had invited all countries to recognize the State of Palestine, and East Jerusalem as its occupied capital.

16. The international community was at a historic crossroads and must come together decisively to defend international law and the principles that underpinned it. If the United Nations failed to defend international law, chaos would ensue.

17. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Observer for Bangladesh) expressed his gratitude to the Committee for the timely response to the announcement by the United States that it would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. His delegation was concerned that the announcement could trigger grave consequences, inflame the Muslim world and unleash new waves of hostility and violent extremism. It was also concerned about the imposition of Israeli control over East Jerusalem and changes to the city's historical and legal status, its demographic composition and its Arab-Islamic character. The legal status of Jerusalem must be preserved in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. Bangladesh urged all relevant parties to take a pragmatic approach to the process of reaching a two-State solution for the sake of regional peace and stability.

18. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia) said that the dignity of the United Nations system must be preserved and

international law defended. Indonesia strongly agreed that the Government of the United States should reverse its decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The President of Indonesia and government ministers had attended the OIC extraordinary meeting to express their solidarity with the Palestinian cause and to ensure that international law and the Charter of the United Nations were upheld.

19. **Mr. Khiari** (Tunisia) said that his delegation rejected the announcement of the United States recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the intention to transfer its embassy there. The Government of Tunisia commended the League of Arab States and OIC for their efforts to oppose that decision and welcomed the outcomes of the extraordinary OIC summit. The delegation of Tunisia affirmed its full support for the proposal of the representative of the State of Palestine regarding the submission to the Security Council of a draft resolution condemning the illegality of the decision. Efforts must continue towards recognition of the State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital. Achieving that goal would be a step forward for the Palestinian people in the exercise of their rights under international law.

20. **Mr. Munir** (Pakistan) said that his delegation had urged the United States to reverse its decision, to comply fully with all applicable Security Council resolutions and to renew its commitment to the two-State solution. The Prime Minister of Pakistan had attended the OIC extraordinary summit and had made three specific points. Firstly, if the Security Council was unable to respond to the announcement of the United States, support should be sought from the General Assembly. Secondly, States should follow up on OIC decisions concerning economic measures aimed at changing the behaviour of the occupying Power. Thirdly, the Committee should seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice.

21. **Mr. Atlassi** (Observer for Morocco) said that as soon as the King of Morocco had learned that the United States would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, he had sent a message to President Trump warning of the repercussions of that decision. He had also sent a letter to the Secretary-General warning of the danger. A Moroccan delegation had attended the extraordinary OIC summit, and the Moroccan Parliament had also condemned the decision in a statement. Morocco stood ready to extend a helping hand to its Palestinian brethren, especially with respect to the establishment of a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital.

22. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that on 6 December 2017 the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs had issued a communiqué regarding the decision by the United States of America to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In the communiqué, the Ministry had expressed its deep concern about and rejection of the unilateral decision, which clearly constituted a serious and flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The decision would unquestionably increase tensions in the region and hamper all efforts to reopen peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians. Through the communiqué, the Ministry had also requested the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and adopt a firm stance on the matter. Cuba supported all efforts being made by various groups, including regional groups such as OIC and the League of Arab States, to bring the issue before the Security Council and to seek its support for the draft resolution being promoted by the State of Palestine. All delegations should vote in favour of the draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination at the forthcoming General Assembly plenary meeting on 19 December 2017.

23. **Mr. Kumar** (India) said that Indian support for the Palestinian cause remained steadfast. A just and durable peace was needed in the Middle East region, and the path forward would involve a negotiated settlement between Israel and the State of Palestine based on security arrangements. India had significantly stepped up its development and nation-building efforts in the State of Palestine. In 2017, President Mahmoud Abbas had made his third State visit to India, and Indian officials had visited the State of Palestine. India was involved in several large-scale development projects there and had also increased its core contribution to UNRWA in the previous year.

Reports on meetings of the Committee at United Nations Headquarters and abroad

24. **Mr. Inguanez** (Malta), Rapporteur, said that the Committee had sent a delegation to the United Republic of Tanzania from 4 to 6 December 2017 to mobilize support for the two-State solution, and to inform local public opinion about life under Israeli occupation and the mandate of the Committee. The delegation comprised the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Seck (Senegal); two Vice-Chairs of the Committee, Ambassadors Djani (Indonesia) and Gertze (Namibia); and Ambassador Mansour (Observer for the State of Palestine). The delegation had held meetings with Tanzanian ministers and focus group meetings with representatives of civil society organizations, media

workers and former high government officials. A public lecture on the work of the Committee had been organized with a local university. The delegation had also met informally with the ambassadors of Egypt, Kuwait, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

25. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania had reiterated that his country was opposed to the acquisition of territory by force and had reaffirmed its commitment to the two-State solution. The Committee delegation had highlighted the historical role played by the United Republic of Tanzania in anti-colonial and national liberation movements, and the collective responsibility to assist the Palestinian people in achieving their inalienable rights.

26. Separate meetings with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media editors and a public lecture attended by some 150 students had shown that interlocutors were generally supportive of the plight of Palestinians. Civil society organizations had demonstrated an interest in working in solidarity with Palestinians and had requested to be kept informed of developments. Additional work could be done in the United Republic of Tanzania and in the region to mobilize solidarity. The promotion and dissemination of information in Kiswahili on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, for example, could help to keep the public informed. Exchanges among students, academics and NGOs could also mobilize support.

27. Informal consultations had taken place on 5 December 2017 between the Chair of the Working Group of the Committee and the Co-Chairs of the Israel-Palestine NGO Working Group. The consultations had focused on ways to strengthen their collaboration.

28. Lastly, he had been honoured to deliver a message on behalf of the Committee at the opening event organized by the Decentralized Cooperation Network for Palestine, in partnership with Cités Unies France to celebrate French-Palestinian friendship and cooperation. The event had been held on 28 November 2017, on the eve of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

29. *At the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Giovetti (Cités Unies France) took a place at the Committee table.*

30. **Mr. Giovetti** (Cités Unies France) said that his organization was a network of local government officials active in decentralized cooperation with Palestinian cities. Recent events not only concerning Jerusalem but also the withdrawal of the United States from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had called into question the very nature of international law and diplomacy. Their implications therefore went far beyond the question of Palestine alone and concerned everyone. However, it was important not to yield to such provocative acts as the result would be catastrophic. The members of Cités Unies France hoped to enhance their work by partnering with the Committee and to develop a joint response to the new challenges. They also hoped that France and Europe would fulfil their responsibilities with respect to the conflict.

31. *Mr. Giovetti (Cités Unies France) withdrew.*

32. *At the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Wildman (United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries) took a place at the Committee table.*

33. **Mr. Wildman** (United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries) said that NGOs around the world had condemned the decision of the United States. They affirmed the international nature of Jerusalem and the importance of United Nations resolutions. Jerusalem should be a shared and open city for all faiths and peoples. Those NGOs had also affirmed that the final status of the city must be determined through negotiations with the Palestinian people.

34. *Mr. Wildman (United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries) withdrew.*

Updates from Member States on their activities related to the question of Palestine

35. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country's solidarity with the Palestinian cause was manifested through cultural events, among other activities: in October alone the first-ever Palestinian food and craft fair held in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had taken place; and the Venezuelan embassy in the State of Palestine had held a poetry evening with the title "Venezuela and Palestine: One Heart".

36. On 6 December 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had issued a communiqué stating that President Maduro Moros of Venezuela, in the name of the Government and people of his country, roundly rejected and condemned the arbitrary decision of the United States Government to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and that he reaffirmed his commitment to a negotiated, peaceful and lasting resolution to the conflict.

37. At the extraordinary OIC summit held the previous day in Istanbul, President Maduro Moros, in his capacity as President of the Non-Aligned Movement, had also delivered a forceful and detailed statement in which he had rejected the unilateral decision by the Government of the United States of America and had called on that

Government to cease its provocations. President Maduro Moros had reaffirmed his commitment to do everything he could within the United Nations system to ensure that the situation was rectified. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela supported any initiatives that the Committee might take to counter the decision, and, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, would do everything within its power to support the State of Palestine in the challenging circumstances.

38. The year 2018 would mark the seventieth anniversary of the start of the Palestinian Nakbah, and the thirtieth anniversary of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence. Those anniversaries should be used to enlist support from across the United Nations system for actions that would bring the suffering of the Palestinian people to an end and make effective the Palestinian Declaration of Independence.

39. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia) said that on 5 December 2017, Indonesia had held an international seminar and photography exhibition on technical support provided by Indonesia to the State of Palestine. The event had tried to use the momentum of Palestinian national reconciliation efforts to promote the issue of humanitarian aid to the State of Palestine. The event had been attended by representatives of foreign missions in Jakarta, government officials, international organizations and donors. The exhibition had highlighted technical support provided by Indonesia in the areas of agriculture, tourism, health and infrastructure.

40. He urged delegations to vote in favour of the draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination at the upcoming General Assembly plenary meeting.

41. **Mr. Zambrano Ortiz** (Ecuador) said that on 26 November 2017, on the occasion of an official visit to the State of Palestine by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had reiterated its support for a durable and fair solution, and the two Governments had agreed to establish, in 2018, a joint committee charged with strengthening bilateral cooperation.

42. On 7 December 2017 his Government had issued an official communiqué in which it had rejected the decision by the President of the United States of America concerning Jerusalem, on the grounds that it was contrary to international law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council. In the communiqué, his Government had also called on the international community to support a lasting and fair solution to the conflict, based on the existence of the two States of Palestine and Israel with their borders as they were before 1967, and with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. That would be the only way to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East.

Other matters

43. **Mr. Escoto** (Nicaragua) said that Nicaragua supported the statements already made concerning the deplorable decision by the Government of the United States of America with regard to the status of Jerusalem. At the current time, more than ever, the Committee must work hard, in solidarity with the Palestinian people, to ensure respect for all resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, which reflected consensual principles.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.